

A
DISSERTATION
ON THE
GOSPEL-DÆMONIACKS.

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L O N D O N:

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DISSEMINATION

OF THE

GOVERNMENT

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THE
EDITOR
TO THE
READER.

THE Manuscript of this Work was put into my Hands, by my late Friend the Author, who, at that Time, gave me strong Reasons for not printing it; which Reasons being now at an End; I have carefully read it; and finding it contain, so much good Sense, sound Learning, and the strictest Regard for Truth; I think it would be inexcusable to deprive the World of so valuable a Present.

Present. This is the Motive which makes me consider it as my Duty to print it : and I make no doubt but the Reader will be entirely of my Opinion, when he has had the Satisfaction of perusing it. I should inform him it was occasioned by the Bishop of *St. David's* Tract on the same Subject.

A

DISSERTATION, &c.

MR. Woolston in the impious Treatises he has lately published upon the Miracles of our blessed Saviour, asserts that what is recorded of them by the Evangelists, is not to be understood in the literal Meaning, but as only prophetical and parabolical Narratives of what will be mysteriously done by Jesus. The Bishop of St. David's in answering his scurrilous Libels, having a just Indignation at his Manner of treating our most holy Religion, when he comes to the Devils entering into the Herd of Swine, runs, it may be, into a contrary Mistake, by keeping too close to the Letter of the Story, and has more embarrassed himself in supposing our Saviour to have "suffered about three
" Devils to enter into each Hog, p. 159." than if he had quite excluded the Devil from having any Thing really to do in the whole Affair. This indeed would have been deny-

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ing the Reality of diabolical Possessions ; and whether the Bishop might have done so with Justice and Truth, is the Subject of the following Treatise, And here I must warn my Reader not to expect Certainty or Demonstration ; the Nature of the Subject being such, that probable Conjecture is, I think, all it will admit of. The most I pretend to is to produce such Proof as may engage the Mind to judge the Proposition I advance to be true rather than the contrary.

That there may be a great many different Ranks and Orders of spiritual Beings, is a Proposition which has nothing in it beyond our Belief or contradictory to our clear and distinct Knowledge. It may be there is a greater and fuller Variety in the spiritual, and greater Difference from one another, than in the animal Creation. But then it must be acknowledged that our natural Reason, notwithstanding the vast Extent of the Penetration and Elevation of our Thoughts, stops short here, that our Understanding affords us, at most, but a bare Conjecture ; and that we can know nothing certainly in this Particular but by a divine Revelation. These Spirits, whatever Sorts or Kinds they are of,
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whether good or bad, are beyond the Discovery of our Understandings ; our natural Faculties as much fail us in finding out wherein they differ from us, as from one another ; and their Nature, Power and Condition, are equally beyond the Discovery of Reason.

Thus bounded are our natural Faculties ; and the Assistance divine Revelation has afforded us, is not, perhaps, so great, as some Gentlemen may imagine. As to evil spiritual Beings, which is the Point before us, the Old Testament is silent. Such Texts as may be supposed to relate to any such Thing, we shall by and by have a more convenient Place to take Notice of. All the Assistance we are therefore to have in our Knowledge of them, we must look for in the Name St. Jude speaks of an Order of “ Angels which kept
 “ not their first Estate, but left their own
 “ Habitation, and are reserved in everlasting
 “ Chains under Darkness unto the Judgment
 “ of the great Day*.” And St. *Peter* tells us that God had “ delivered them into
 “ Chains of Darkness, to be reserved unto
 “ Judgment †.” But neither of these Apostles mention any Revelation they had of this.

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which

* V. 6.

† 2 *Eph.* ii. 4.

which is frequent in Scripture in the like Cases. I should therefore, rank this Story of the fallen Angels with what the former of these Apostles tells us of Michael's disputing with the Devil, and with St. Paul's giving the Names of *Jannes* and *Jambres* to Pharaoh's Magicians * which are owned by all to be only Opinions which were current amongst the *Jews* at that Time. But if we do acknowledge an Order of evil Spirits, (which I own a Scripture Doctrine) I cannot see but that we must of Necessity suppose them to have fallen from a happy State; for we cannot conceive of an infinite good God, that he should create a Rank of Beings in themselves evil, or, without their own Fault, to suffer Misery. But over and above this, we have in the New Testament a Devil represented to us as "the God of this World†, "the Prince of the Power of the Air †, and the whole World is said to be "his," and every Thing in it "at his Disposal ||." But whether this Devil, and what is said of him, is to be understood literally or metaphorically, I shall not here enquire, but take

* 2 *Tim.* iii. 8.
 || *Mat.* iv. 9.

† 2 *Cor.* iv. 14.

† *Eph.* ii. 2.

take it in the Bishop of St. David's Sense ; though " 'tis manifest," says the Dean of Sarum, " all that is intended in Scripture, " is only to represent that State of Sin and " Guilt Mankind are in ; to let them know " what is required of them for the future, in " Order for the Recovery out of it *."

But it being neither my Opinion nor Intention to deny the Existence of an Order of malignant evil Spirits, such as are called Devils, let us, having supposed their Being, see what we shall be the nearer to the Point of their possessing Men. I believe neither the Bishop of St. David's nor the Zealots for the Reality of Possessions, are for making even the Prince of these Spirits, with the Manichæans an infinite evil Principle ; but attribute to him an extensive Power and Dominion. It is impossible for us to know, as I have already taken Notice, unless it had been revealed to us, what the Power either of a good or bad Spirit is ; we must not therefore pretend to set Bounds to it, or to say, how far it can reach and no farther. But these being invisible Agents, I think we may pronounce of them, that if they have
any

* Origin of Moral Evil, p. 273.

any Power at all of acting upon Matter, tho' we suppose it to be no greater than ours are endued with, they are capable of performing Things surprizing to us, such as are really and truly Miracles; that they may bring upon Men innumerable Calamities, and destroy Body or Life. But then while we suppose that they can act upon Matter, or whatsoever other Powers we imagine them indued with, we must acknowledge them to depend upon the supreme Being; and that whatever they are impowered to do, must be by the Permission and good Will of God in such Manner as is agreeable to him in the Administration of the Universe †. And hence

† And this seems to be his Lordship's Opinion, for having p. 8. told us that "a true Miracle is properly a supernatural Operation, disagreeing with and repugnant to the usual Course of Things, and the known Laws of Nature, either as to the Subject-Matter, or the Manner of its Performance." He presently after says, p. 9. "Tho' it may be allowed that there are Beings in the Spiritual World that are capable of performing Things above the Power of Men, and therefore amazing to Mankind; yet it is justly denied, that any created Beings, and consequently Agents of a limited Power, are capable of performing the aforesaid Power and real Miracles, either those of the *Matter* or of the *Manner*, independently of God; (as is supposed in the present Case) since great as their Power is

hence it must follow, that if these Spirits do at any Time perform any Thing miraculous; if they bring any Calamity upon Mankind; it must be by the immediate Permission of God, who, we cannot but suppose, has restrained their acting, and given them Laws and Bounds which they cannot pass: for every subordinate intelligent Agent must be restrained by him from altering or interposing in the regular Course of Things in this lower World ‡. So that if we suppose the Calamities the Dæmoniacks in the Gospels suffered, were occasioned by the real Possession of evil Spirits, we must acknowledge them to be miraculous Effects proceeding from the immediate

“ is, it is not infinite, and therefore cannot perform those
 “ Operations, either as to the *Matter* or the *Manner* of
 “ them; no less Power than what is infinite being able to
 “ overcome the otherwise insuperable Difficulties and na-
 “ tural Impossibilities that attend them.”

‡ Or as his Lordship goes on and argues, p. 10. “ If
 “ any spiritual Agents, placed in different Ranks between
 “ God and Mankind, were supposed to perform such mi-
 “ raculous Actions independently of God, they must like-
 “ wise be supposed to have an equal Power of creating and
 “ restoring with God himself, and therefore not to be in-
 “ ferior, limited and created Beings; which is contrary to
 “ the very Supposition of their Nature, and is so absurd as
 “ consequentially to introduce a Plurality of Beings of in-
 “ finite Power, and therefore of Rival-Gods.”

mediate Permission of God; and that there were as many of these Miracles as Dæmoniacs. And we shall be hard put to it to find any good Reason, or wise End or Purpose, for which God should permit such a Species of Miracles to be wrought in the Gospel Age, and to be so lavish of them, after all other Miracles, and even the Spirit of Prophecy, had ceased in his Church for 400 Years *. We can't say that God made use of Devils to punish particular Persons for their Sins; for besides that there is no Reason why they should be so punished in that Age more than in any other, we find Infants amongst these Dæmoniacs, who could have no Sins of their own to be punished for, and that in such an extraordinary Manner, *Mat. xvii. 18.*

But to leave this dry Reasoning; let us inquire how the Jews came by their Notion of Possessions, and how we are to understand our Saviour's Miracles of curing the Dæmoniacs, particularly the Miracle which occasioned these Reflections, which has stronger Marks of a real Possession than any of the rest.

Dr.

* We cannot conceive it (says Bishop Leng. p. 415.) to be a Thing becoming, or worthy of the divine Majesty, to work a Miracle for no End or Purpose at all.

Dr. Prideaux, Part I. l. 6. having observed that the Babylonish Captivity cured the Jews of their Idolatry, says, “ that they would “ have been unblamable therein, had they “ not over done it by adding corrupt Tra- “ ditions of their own devising.” Amongst the Traditions the Doctor alludes to, I take it, was their Opinion of the Devil’s exercising a very extensive Power.

It is, I think, clear that the Jews had no such Belief before the Captivity : Those Texts in the Old Testament, which may, perhaps, at first Sight seem to favour such an Opinion, have a quite different Thing in View. Our Translators do indeed render the Word *Searim*, *Seirim*, or *Sehirim*, Lev. xvii. 7.— 2 Cron. xi. 15. and Ps. 106. 37. by *Devils*. But the Passage in Leviticus plainly relates to the Idolatries the Israelites had been guilty of ; as that in the Chronicles does to *Jeroboam’s Calves* ; and that in the Psalms to the Idols they had sacrificed their Sons and Daughters unto. Now we nowhere find * that they ever worshiped Devils, or any evil Spirits. The Greeks,
C Romans,

* Notwithstanding what his Lordship has said, p. 158.

Romans, and other Nations, did indeed, in after Times, worship the Eumenides, Parcæ, Furiæ, Diræ* Ultrices, and such like Divinities, to avert their Malice, and keep them from doing them Harm : But we have no Reason to believe from any Thing we meet with in Scripture, that the Jews were ever infected with that Idolatry. God frequently upbraids them by his Prophets for worshiping “ the Host of Heaven, “ the Gods of the Amorites, &c. Idols “ which had Mouths and spoke not, &c.” but no where with the Worship of any evil Being, which one can’t conceive but he would have done, had they been guilty of any such Thing. And whosoever considers the Story of Aaron’s and Jeroboam’s Calves, which Idolatry is particularly alluded to in the Places before us, will never be able to bring himself to believe that they were made to represent Devils, or any evil Being, but that God *who had brought them out of the Land of Egypt*. But the same Word, as it is used by Isaiah xiii. 21. and xxxiv. 14. where

* The Diræ are placed by Virgil by the Throne of Jove, from whence they were sent to punish Men,

*Hæ Jovis ad Solum sæviq; in Limine Regis
Apparent. Æn. xii. ver. 849.*

where our Translators have rendered it *Satyrs*, does, I think, plainly shew what we are to understand by it. The Prophet in the first of those Places foretelling the Ruin and Desolation of Babylon; in the other, of Idumæa, says, that they shall be an Habitation for doleful Creatures; and, among others of that Kind, for the *Seirim*, which Word properly signifies *Goats*, and ought so to be interpreted in those, and the other Places where the Idols of the Heathen are alluded to, they worshiping their Deities under the Form of Goats, and other Pilosi, which every one knows who is but the least acquainted with their Idolatries. And accordingly the Seventy render the Passage in Leviticus by ματαια, Vanitates, which agrees well enough with such Idols. And again, the Place in the Chronicles by τοις ειδωλοις και τοις ματαιοις, Idolis & Vanitatibus.

But there is another Word which our Translators have likewise rendered by *Devils*; it is *Schedim*; we meet with it Deut. xxxii. 17. where Moses speaks likewise of the Idolatries the Jews had provoked God with. But this Word, as is generally agreed, im-

ports as much as *Perditores*, or *Vastatores*, and if we take it in that Sense meant properly enough, from the Effect, be given to the Idols the Children of Israel had worshiped, they leading those who paid them any Adoration, into the greatest Perdition and Misery. But “ some, says Patrick, “ think they are called Schedim ironically, “ by Way of Scorn, the true God being “ Schaddai, the omnipotent and all-sufficient; “ and these called, by Way of Mockery, “ counterfeit Gods, who had no Power to “ help their Worshipers, nor were sufficient “ to preserve themselves.” Whichsoever of these Senses we take the Word in, we shall have no Reason to believe Moses had any evil Being in View. But the learned Reader, if he be not satisfied with this, may turn to Van Dale *De Origine ac Progressu Idololatriæ et Superstitionum*, c. v. where he will find more Things in favour of this Opinion, than I have either Inclination or Time to transcribe.

But the Jews were no sooner carried captive to Babylon, than they imbibed new Opinions, and received such Principles from Chal-

dæism, as they were not before acquainted with. They there found the old Magian Religion, the established Worship ; “ this
 “ held the Being of two first Causes, the
 “ first Light, or the good God, who was
 “ the Author of all Good ; and the other
 “ Darkneſs, or the evil God, who was the
 “ Author of all Evil *.” This they embraced pretty much in the ſame Manner as Zoroaſter ſoon after reformed it, who holding as they did the Principle of “ a One ſu-
 “ preme Being, independent and ſelf-exiſting
 “ from all Eternity, taught that under him
 “ there were two Angels, one the Angel of
 “ Light, who is the Author and Director
 “ of all Good ; and the other the Angel of
 “ Darkneſs, who is the Author and Direc-
 “ tor of all Evil †.” And being once pre-
 judiced in Favour of the Exiſtence of this evil Angel, to avoid making him an infinite Being, as they ſuppoſed he muſt have been, if he had been able in his own Perſon to produce all the Evil, both natural and moral, which is viſible in the World : They imagined he had a Multitude who acted in Sub-
 ordination

* Prideaux, P. I. l. 4.

† Ibid.

ordination to one another under him ; and observing the abominable Rites and Impieties with which the Heathens worshiped their Gods and Dæmons, they concluded them to be no other than these evil Angels, and from their being worshiped under the Form of Goats, Monkeys, &c. supposed that they had appeared to their Devotees in the Shape and Figure of those Animals. They ranged them in the same Order, and under the same Denominations as the Heathens did their Idols ; and understood such Passages in the Old Testament, as related to the Pagan Divinities of their new invented evil Beings, to whom they gave a very large and extensive Power, even the possessing of not only such Persons as we may suppose punished by God for their Sins, but such as were innocent, incapable of sinning, or making any Trial of their Faith *. Their Pharisees, and the Talmudists their Followers, went on, improved the Superstition, and invented monstrous idle Tales of these evil Spirits, and devised such ridiculous Conceits of the Manner in which they were generated, as would
surfeit

* Mat. xvii, 18.

surfeit a Reader ; and having from thence conceived a Sort of Monsters and Prodigies, such as the *Onocentauri*, *Sirenes*, *Lamiæ*, &c. explained the prophetical Writings of them, in Places where the Prophets themselves never dreamt of any such Things.

The Power they attributed to these evil Spirits, as well as the idle Stories they told of them, could not but be too gross a Doctrine to be received by All, especially after the Canon of Scripture was settled, and they had those holy Writings read and explained to them in their Synagogues. I make no doubt but they who searched farthest into the Nature of Things, opposed the generally-received Opinion, especially that of Possessions. They could not, it may be, conceive how a pure spiritual Substance could, without the Permission or Interposition of God, immediately act upon Matter ; they could not but say that this was not according to the known Laws of Nature ; and that for God to permit it, would at least be seeming to act in Concert with an evil Being ; and that if it could be supposed that such a Spirit had once entered into a Man, such Person must have

two Principles of Action within him at once, the Devil and his own Soul, which must act by Turns, or both together; and it can't well be conceived that a Body so acted upon, could subsist long; and what surprising Effects must not be expected from it while it did? They must have expected that these Devils, though finite, should have done a great deal of Mischief which they did not do; that some one of them having once had the Possession and Power over a human Body, instead of tormenting the Wretch, should, as when he informed the Serpent, have been for advancing the Kingdom of Darkness, have preferred new Arguments in Behalf of it, and debauched the Morals of the People.

I can't help conjecturing that this gave the first Rise to the antientest Sect amongst the Jews, who were called Sadducees. It sprung up, it is certain, soon after the Return from the Babylonish Captivity, and, as Dr. Prideaux tells us of the Professors of it, “ at
 “ first they were no more than what the
 “ Karraites are now, that is, they would
 “ not receive the Traditions of the Elders,
 “ but stuck to the written Word only. And
 “ as

“ as long, says he, as they proceeded no farther, they were in the right; but afterwards they imbibed other Doctrines *.”

Amongst these Traditions of the Elders, which they rejected, I suppose was the Doctrine of the Being and Power of evil Angels. Josephus, who best understood this Sect, having himself made a Trial of it, (beginning of his Life) says, “ that they were for the most Part Men of Quality †;” and as such, it may be, they were not so likely to swallow Superstitions received by the Vulgar. It is certain that one of the principal Points they are charged with, is the denying the Being of Angels and Spirits. It may be, at first, (for we cannot suppose that their Opinions sprung up all together, and at once,) they only denied what was generally received concerning evil Angels; and that their Adversaries branded them with a false Imputation. It is not doubted but they received the Books of Moses as Canonical Scripture, (and it is generally believed, the Rest of the Jewish Canon likewise, Scaliger’s Elench. Trihæres. c. xvi.) and we find in them such frequent

D Mention

* P. II. l. 5.

† Ant. l. 18. c. ii.

Mention of the Appearance of good Angels, as is inconsistent with denying their Existence ; and we are no where told how they got over that Difficulty, or what Construction they put upon those Passages || ; at least, at first, they denied the Being of such Angels only as were evil: And the Generality of the People believing the superstitious Opinions they had picked up in Chaldea, which were very much augmented by receiving (and that too not all at once) the apocryphal Books into the Canon of their Scriptures, in which we have such Notions of Lemures, Spectres, Angels and Devils, laid such monstrous Opinions to the Sadducees Charge, as they themselves might not profess: However this be, they would not be the only Persons to whom have been ascribed Doctrines little agreeable to their real Sentiments by forced Arts, as is but too plain from the Controvertists of our own Times. What I have been saying on this Head is, however, no more than Conjecture, though

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|| It is not impossible but that the Historians who have mentioned them, may have misrepresented their Doctrine perhaps.

I do not see how they could have continued, as it is certain they did, in Communion with the Jewish Church, if they had really held the Opinions they are charged with, or have got into their Hands, in the Reign of Alexander, all the Places in the Sanhedrim*, or have had so many of their Sect promoted to the High Priesthood. And when the Pharisees sprung up as a Sect, and appeared in Opposition to the Sadducees, having intoxicated their superstitious Understandings with their apocryphal Chaldee Notions, which by that Time were improved by their Conversation with the Greeks, they dreamed of nothing but Devils and Spectres, carried the Power of the Devil to a surprising Height, and conceived every Thing they did not understand, under a Notion of evil Spirits. They gave Names derived from them to such Qualities and Properties as were beyond their Knowledge; and, to affront and run down the Sadducees, formed their Manner of Speech and Expressions, in all possible Instances, from Angels and Devils.

D 2

Thus

* Maimon. Halac. Sanhedr. c. 11. Joseph. Ant. l. xx. c. 8.

Thus they said that all Distempers were brought upon Mankind by evil Spirits ; especially, says Doctor Hammond, (on John vii. 20.) a great Advocate for the Reality of Possessions, “ those who were more strangely
 “ affected, without any visible Cause of it,
 “ were generally thought to suffer this from
 “ the Devil’s getting Power to possess them :”
 And every Disease they did not understand, and the Effects of which they could not account for, (and they were withal very ignorant both in Anatomy and Physic) they attributed to their Power, and supposed that some Devil or other entered into and possessed such Persons as a Punishment for their Sins. And, it may be, they gave (as we find the Rabbins, and particularly Maimonides, who was both the most learned, and the soberest of them, afterwards did) the Names of Devils to Distempers. “ Cordicus,
 “ say they, is a Spirit which seizes on him
 “ who drinks too much Wine out of the
 “ Wine-press ; and of Shibta they say, It
 “ it is a Spirit which seizes on Children by
 “ the Neck, upon the Sinews behind the
 “ Neck,

“ Neck, and dryeth them up from their
 “ Use and Strength till it kills them *.” And
 Maimonides says, “ A Man who is troubled
 “ with an evil Spirit, and says when the
 “ Sicknefs begins upon him, write a Bill of
 “ Divorcement to my Wife, he says as good
 “ as nothing, for he is *non compos Mentis* †.”

Thus a Man was no sooner seized with any
 strange Effect, the Cause of which was not
 visible, than they immediately cried, the
 Devil had laid hold of and possessed him.
 And hence it is that we meet with so many
 Dæmoniacks in the Gospels, and find them
 mentioned, not as a Thing that was sur-
 prising or unusual at that Time, though it
 would be difficult to meet with any such
 now, unless it be where the true Spirit of
 Popery shews itself in the credulous and ig-
 norant Superstition of the People, and tri-
 umphs over the Judgment of Mankind.
 They seem to have been nothing more than
 Persons affected with Madness, Fits, Con-
 vulsions, the Falling-Sicknefs, or some such
 Distemper, which was beyond their Skill and
 Capacity

* Talm. in Gittin. per 7. vide R. Solom. & Nissim. ibid.

† An Gernšin. per 2.

Capacity to comprehend. As in the Case of Lunacy and Madness: They not knowing how to account for such a Disorder of the Mind and Body, and Senses, especially when it proceeded from no Disease or visible Cause, they never looked into the Symptoms or nature of the Distemper, but concluded, and believed, that such Persons were acted and troubled by some evil Spirit, and gave all such the Term *Δαιμονιζόμενοι*: and the Generality of those who have that Name given them in the Gospels, appear, by their wild and raving Behaviour, to be Madmen. And accordingly “ he hath a Devil, and is mad; “ why hear ye him?” John x. 20. are two Terms of the same Signification joined together to denote the same Thing. “ I suppose (says the great Mr. Mede on the “ Place, who tells us that he was persuaded, “ till he should hear better Reason to the “ contrary, that the Dæmoniacks were no “ other than what we call Madmen and Lunatics) the latter Words to be an Explanation of the former.” So again John vii. 20. “ The People answered and said, “ Thou hast a Devil who goeth about to “ kill thee?” The only Sense of which can be,

be, “ Thou art certainly mad to talk thus.” And agreeably to this, when the Jews taxed our Saviour with Inconsistence in his Discourse, they tell him that he had a Devil. John viii. 48. and again, “ Now we “ know that thou hast a Devil. Abraham “ is dead, and the Priests ; and thou say’st, “ If a Man keep my saying, he shall never “ taste Death.” ver. 52. And on the contrary, they who had a right Understanding of our Saviour’s Meaning, and concluded from the Cohærence of his Discourse, that he must be in his right Senses, said, “ These “ are not the Words of him that hath a “ Devil.” John x. 21. “ These are neither “ the Words nor Actions of a Madman,” as Hammon paraphrases it. Their common Phrase and Manner of Speech being to say, that such Persons as were mad, were possessed by a Devil. The old Greeks had not an unlike Opinion of their mad People ; they attributed their Disorder to their being delivered over to Furies by the Gods, which deprived them of their Reason, as is plain from the Stories of Hercules, Alcæon, Orestes, &c. And their Cure they generally attributed to

to Expirations, or the Performance of some religious Rite or other. Though some of them, it is certain, have had their Senses restored to them by the Use of Physick, which shews plainly that their Indisposition was within the Power of natural Means of Cure. There was something like this too amongst the old Romans, who called their Madmen * *Cerriti* & *Larvati*. They were called *Cerriti*, as if they were *à Cerere percussi*. *Larvati*, is the same as *Larvis*, i. e. *Dæmonibus acti*, as *Festus* says your *Larvati* are *Furiosi* & *Mente moti*, quasi *Larvis exterriti*; as if they had been frightened with Spirits.

But the Jews, in our Saviour's Time, believed not only such Persons as were mad to be possessed by the Devil, but those likewise who were afflicted with any Disease, which was attended with strange and surprising Symptoms. This is plain from the Person who is said to be possessed, Mat. xvii. 18.

but

* *Hellade percussâ Marius cum præcipitat se ;
Cerritus fuit, an commotæ Crimine Mentis
Absolves Hominem, & Sceleris damnabis eundem.*

Horace, Sat. 1. 2. Sat. 3. v. 277.

but was nothing more than one who had an Epilepsy or the Falling Sicknefs, as is clear from the Description given us of his Disorder, “ His falling into the Fire and Water *, ” and from what the Father attributes to the Operations of the Spirit, *Luke ix. 39.* were we have an Account of the same Person, “ Lo, a Spirit taketh him, and he suddenly
 “ crieth out, and it teareth him that he foameth
 “ again, and bruising him, hardly departeth
 “ from him.” And from his being worse at the Change of the Moon, as such People frequently are, he is said to be *a Lunatick*, *Mat. xvii. 15.* But the Effects of the Disease being something extraordinary, the People imagin’d them to proceed from the *Devil*. So likewise the Woman who had been for eighteen Years crooked who “ was bowed together,
 “ and could in no wise lift up herself,” *Luke xiii. 11.* is said to have “ had a Spirit of Infir-
 “ mity eighteen Years,” and to have been
 “ bound by Satan.”

It was not an unlike Opinion the *Jews* had of the Cure, in some Cases at least, of their diseased Persons, they attributing it to a good

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Angel,

* Ver. 15.

Angel, as is sufficiently evident from the Story of our Saviour's curing the Man at the *Pool of Bethesda*. The Waters of the Pool had a healing Quality; the daily washing the Entrails of the Sacrifices, especially at their great Feasts, when there were many Thousands of them offer'd, the Congelations of the Blood, and what was wash'd off from the Carcases, sinking to the Bottom, moved or troubled the Waters, and communicated to them a sanatory Virtue, infomuch, that whosoever first stept in was cured of *whatsoever Disease he had*. This the *Jews* ascribed to the Operations of an Angel, or to the *Angel of the Lord*, as it is in the *Alexandrian Manuscript*; tho' it is very plain to any one, who considers the Story, and the Cures which have been perform'd by the Application of the warm vital Parts of Beasts, that it was a natural, not a miraculous, Way of Curing.

The *Jews* being, as we have seen, of Opinion, that several Diseases, especially such as disturbed the Understanding and distorted the Body, tho' not at all unnatural in themselves, were owing to the Person's being seiz'd by evil Spirits, and possessed by a Devil; and their
common

common Form and Manner of Speech being framed agreeably to such a Conception, the Language of our Saviour and his Apostles, was necessarily to be formed upon the same Model that it might be suited to their Apprehension. It was their Purpose to manifest the Divinity of their Mission by working Miracles, and, amongst others, by curing Distempers; not to undeceive Men in a Point, which it was a Physician's Business to examine, and the Consequence of which did not at all concern their eternal Interest. They do not therefore trouble themselves with the natural or metaphysical Causes of Things, but as if they would set Bounds to our Curiosity, and turn our Thoughts from such Objects, the Knowledge of which, is not necessary to us, the better to engage our Attention to such Subjects as more immediately concern our Duty and Salvation. They do not attempt to undeceive the People in this trivial Error, any more than in their Opinion of the Power of Magick and Enchantments, but to persuade them to draw the natural and proper Consequences from their Discourses, and the Miracles they wrought. And, the better to attain this End, in all their Reasonings and Actings, they accom-

moderate themselves to the vulgar Prejudices and to the Opinions commonly received. The same Method are Philosophers and the Learned oblige to take, whensoever they speak to the Populace, or write for the Use of common People; and just so does every skilful Physician, when he visits an hypocondriacal Patient; he does not endeavour to convince him, that his Distemper is all Imagination, but suits his Conversation to the Circumstances and Disposition of the Person, and prescribes agreeably to the Rules of his Art. This is what our blessed Saviour has done with most admirable Patience, Goodness and Wisdom. And the same Course must every one take, who is to have any Thing to do with our present *Americans*, who have the very same Opinion of *Diseases* and *Devils*, as the *Jews* antiently had, and who have a Company of Exorcists who pretend to cure their Patients by frightening away the evil Spirit with their antick Tricks and hideous Gestures.

Let us examine our Saviour's Carriage in curing the Madman, *Matt.* viii. 28. *Mark* v. 1. *Luke* viii. 26. and we shall find it most admirably suited to such a Patient. This
Story

Story is more particularly related, and carries, as I said, stronger Marks of a real Possession than any other. And if I shall not, in explaining this Miracle, keep so close to the Letter as his Lordship has done, I as much venerate and acknowledge the divine Power which performed it, as he can do ; and my Reader will, I believe, whether he joins with me in Opinion as to the Reality of *Possessions* or not, own that it is as really and truly a Miracle, according to his Lordship's Notion of a Miracle, and as certain Evidence of a divine Mission and Authority, to restore a Madman to his Senses by the Force of a bare Word, and speak him into the right Use of his Reason, as to eject a Parcel of Devils out of him, and to destroy a Herd of Swine by a Command, as by a Legion of evil Spirits. So that I shan't fear being at all suspected to favour Mr. *Woolston's* Hypothesis, which I am as far as any one living from approving. It appears then, by the Description given us of this Man, that his Body was well and free from any Malady, and, which is common with Madmen, that he had a surprising Strength, but being disorder'd in his Senses, he thought he had a Legion of Devils within him. It may be, he believ'd that the *Devils* which possessed People, were the Souls
of

of evil Men. This was certainly an Opinion that was current amongst the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, and which they might borrow, as they did, a great many Things not contradictory to their Scriptures from the Schools of the *Platonists*. *Grotius* tells us so from *Theophylact* *. And *human unclean Souls* are reckon'd amongst *Devils* in the Fragments of the antient Book of *Enoch*. *Justin Martyr* is of the same Opinion †, and therefore calls them *Dæmoniacks*, who were possessed by the Souls of the Dead ||. And *Josepbus* expressly tells us, “ that the Spirits which we call
 “ Devils, are only the Souls of wicked
 “ Men, that have gotten Possession of
 “ living Bodies, and would undoubtedly
 “ destroy them, if they were not prevented ‡. And if so, this Madman might likewise, agreeably to their prevailing Opinion, believe one Man might have many Souls, and be possessed with many Spirits ; and that having reflected too much on this Subject, he had troubled and disorderd his Brain. This perhaps made him retire from the Conversation of the World ; and, agreeably to the Fancy he had possessed himself with, as such Persons
 love

* On *Mat.* viii. 28. † *Apol.* i. p. 44. || *Apol.* ii. p. 65.
 ‡ *De Bello*, l. vii. c. 25.

love to sooth their Melancholy, he took up his Residence amongst the Tombs, where the Solitude of the Place confirm'd him in his feign'd Opinion, and was, as he thought, an Abode agreeable to his Devils. This Person met our Blessed Saviour, “ worshiped him, “ and cried with a loud Voice” as if it had been the Devils speaking thro’ his Mouth, that he would not *torment them*, and *besought him* that if he did cast him out of his Body, he would not send him directly to Hell, the Place of their Punishment and Restraint, but, as a more tolerable State of Misery, suffer them to *go into a Herd of Swine*, which was feeding just by. In curing this Frantick our Saviour did not endeavour to make him sensible of the Falseness of the Notion he had confirm’d himself in, but humour’d his way of thinking, spoke to him as if he was speaking to the Devils, commanded them to come out of him; and to give the Madman a Proof of his Cure, as his Devils had desired to go into the Swine, he granted their Request; but as if this had not been sufficient to heal his wounded Spirit, to convince him that the Swine really had the Devils he imagin’d in himself, they run with great Violence down a Precipice into the Sea.

This

This struck his Imagination so strongly, he believing in the miraculous Power of *Christ*, (who at the same Time by his Omnipotence operated on his Blood, removed the Cause of his Disorder, and restored his Spirits to their proper Tone) that he persuaded himself he was cured, acted and talk'd like one who had been deliver'd from so many Devils. In this, and all the like Cases, all the Intention our Saviour had, was to cure the Distemper, not the Mistake of the People ; as they attributed their Infirmities to Possessions, he left them in the Belief that the Cure was Ejection. “ He
 “ always,” says the Dean of *Sarum*, “ avoids
 “ the Enquiry into the natural or metaphy-
 “ sical Causes of things, (as in the Case of the
 “ Man that was born blind, and of the eigh-
 “ teen Persons upon whom the Tower in
 “ *Siloam* fell) and bids Men apply the external
 “ Facts only to themselves, and make a right
 “ Use of them for their Improvement. And
 “ the same may be said concerning that Power
 “ which we find so often ascribed to the
 “ Devil over the Bodies of Men, to inflict
 “ several Diseases ; particularly what is called
 “ Possession. The Testimony our Saviour
 “ gave of his Power and Authority, was the
 working

“ Working of Miracles.—The Principal of
 “ these, was the curing all Sorts of Diseases,
 “ of how long Continuance, and of how
 “ great Malignity soever. Now this Power
 “ was equally evidenced, whatever the
 “ physical Cause of the Distempers were.
 “ So that it is not material as to the religious
 “ Uses to be made of them, what Cause they
 “ are ascribed to. It may be an Error in
 “ natural Philosophy, but by the Truth of
 “ Religion is not at all affected by it. And
 “ hence it is that the Writers of the New
 “ Testament, though they perfectly agree in
 “ every Thing that is essential to Religion,
 “ yet they are not so very nice and exact in
 “ the more remote Circumstances of their
 “ Relations. And therefore a Fact is some-
 “ times represented in different Expressions,
 “ according to the Notions of the Persons to
 “ whom it was delivered, or the different
 “ Views of them that related it. Thus in
 “ the 17th of St. *Mat.* xiv. The Man who
 “ applies to our Saviour to heal his Son, in
 “ his Description of the Disease, uses several
 “ Expressions signifying the same Thing ; as
 “ that he was *lunatick*, that he was *sore vexed*
 “ or as it is in the Original *καὶ ὁ παῖς πάσχει* he
 F “ *suffered*

“ *suffered grievously.* And in the curing of
 “ him, it is said at the 18th ver. that Jesus
 “ rebuked the Devil and he departed out of
 “ him. From which Account it is evident
 “ that some of these Expressions must be
 “ metaphorical, because the same Effect is
 “ ascribed to different Causes. So that it is
 “ most probable that these Denominations
 “ were given from different Considerations
 “ of the same Disease ; as that of *Lunacy*,
 “ from the periodical Revolution of it ; that
 “ of *evil suffering* from the Effects ; and that
 “ of *Possession*, from the reputed Cause. And
 “ if every one of these be included the true
 “ Inference to be drawn is this, that Christ,
 “ who by the Word of his Mouth, healed
 “ the Person thus affected was superior to all
 “ these Causes*.” It is no Wonder this
 Opinion of *Possession* should continue in the
 Christian Church. The Converts, both *Jew-*
ish and *Gentile*, brought (together with *the*
Mystical way of interpreting Scripture†) as
 many of their old Superstitions over with
 them to their new Religion, at least as they
 could think consistent with it. The *Jews*
 their Opinions of *Devils*, and the *Gentiles*
 theirs

* Origin and Cause of Moral Evil. p. 278, &c.

† See his Lordship’s 3d. ch.

theirs of their *Gods*, which the Christians were willing enough they should retain, provided they would believe them to be *Devils* too. And then the most antient Translations of the Scriptures, the *Septuagint*; that of *Aquila* of *Ponticus*, who made use of a *Hebrew* Copy that was extreamly corrupted by the *Rabbins*; of *Theodosion* of *Ephesus*, who took the Liberty both to leave out and to add great Things, as *Origen* has observed; and the old *Italick* Version; were all of them form'd upon the *Jewish* Taste and Opinions. And these the first *Christians* were obliged to make use of, their being very few of them who had a thorough Understanding of *Hebrew*. And when *Origen* published his *Hexapla*, and *Jerom* review'd and amended the old *Italick* Version, tho' they, being both of them Men of the greatest Learning, stripped those Works of a great many old Superstitions, yet, not being perfectly free from *Chaldeism* themselves, especially *Origen* as appears by his Writings against *Celsus*, their Performances could not but retain a Tincture of it. They had both of them been forced to make use of *Pharisees*, who were the great Admirers of the *Talmud*, to teach them *Hebrew* and *Chaldee*,

Chaldee, who it is probable might insinuate some of their Prejudices into them; from which, and their examining the different Versions which went before them, it is no wonder their Works should sometimes smell of *Chaldaick* Superstitions. And then the supposititious *Shepherd of Hermas*, *St. Barnabas's* Epistle, the *Sybilline Oracles*, and abundance of other forged Writings, which were received, some of them even by the Orthodox, into the Canon of Scripture, being stuffed with the Apparitions of Angels and Dæmons, and the like superstitious Notions, could not but greatly contribute to the retaining many of the old Superstitions. And when the *Monks* sprung up, their Writers having brought the Doctrine of *Possessions* to the gratest Perfection, they founded upon it their Arts of imposing upon a bigotted People so successffully that they drew the whole Wealth of the Laity into their Hands, and enriched themselves at the Expence of a deluded People, who parted not only with their Estates but Understandings also. But *Protestantism* has introduced a Freedom of Thinking which is inconsistent with their Doctrine; and if I have made use of that Freedom

to

to destroy the Foundation they built their Arts of Imposing upon, his Lordship, whom I reverence and esteem, and know to be a sincere Protestant will, I hope, excuse me, tho' I have advanced an Argument disagreeable to his Way of thinking against the Superstition of a Church I know him to be a hearty Enemy to. No One can more than I do esteem his Lordship's great Strength of Reasoning, his vast Learning and thorough Knowledge of the Fathers, which have fitted him to adorn his high Station, and enable him to write an irrefragable Defence of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, which must always be respected by every sincere Christian, and possess all Men with the Deference which is justly due to his Dignity and Person ; and if I have noted any Thing, which has fallen without due Thought from his Pen, let it be ascribed to his Uncares at being silent, while Infidelity talked so loud, and appeared boldly without either Shame or Restraint.

F I N I S.

